PERISCOPE

Growth pains

Growing up inevitably provides reasons for introspection — looking behind, within and beyond. Here one is trying to gather up pieces of one's life and make a pattern out of it. And before one knows anything, one is four years old, grappling with questions, issues and responsibilities, some quite unforeseen, and not always sure if one is up to it.

Growing up brings change — for better or for worse. One begins with monthly meetings where mostly work is discussed. As more and more people start attending, one feels the need for regular social gatherings. And so begin the social meetings, where newcomers need not plunge head on into work, where they realise that there is much more to life than loneliness and nervously cruising parks and parks.

Changes come from outside too. One fine day, without a warning, the venue for Counsel Club's monthly meetings for the last three years becomes out of bounds. The landlord (of the member whose residence was the venue) objects to "anti-social activities" and refuses to let any more of it go on under his roof! Luckily, an alternative venue is found and the scattered pieces start falling in place again.

One keeps growing and things start getting more and more diffused. It seems just the other day that all correspondence and counselling duties got carried out smoothly. Then suddenly letters seem to pile up, appointments get missed, tempers are raised and sentiments get hurt.

People sometimes come with problems quite beyond one's reach. One lends a patient ear, but can't help feeling helpless when that is about all one can do. Fortunately, even that much of an effort does not go unappreciated all the time!

And what about confidentiality? One realises what damage a careless word here or an impulsive comment there can do. For words get around, and the first victim is the trust the counsellors reposes in one as a counsellor! And then one wrestles with the desire to settle issues overnight . . . issues such as counselling policy, confidentiality, personal counselling for counsellors etc.

Before one can do much about any of these issues, other plans start going haywire. The lesbians' circle remains a non-starter. And this journal! Well, it's supposed to be a quarterly. Yet the best of efforts can't seem to keep away the delays and the consequent feeling of guilt.

So does one write oneself off as a group? Or does one try to learn from one's mistakes and stagger on?

These questions force one to confront the issue of "group health". The group must grow healthy if it is to help others improve their mental and physical health. But this requires self-introspection by each member. Each member needs to examine his or her "honesty of purpose" in belonging to the group and in participating in its activities.

This may be painful, but then "no pain, no gain... or growth!"

[Signature: Pritha, Pawan]

NAYA PRAVARTAK JAN-JUL'97
LETTERS

A big thanks!

TO Counsel Club members for welcoming me into the organisation and also for giving me a chance to attend the Network East meeting. It was really wonderful for me coming out and meeting so many people who are gay, and yet not feel insecure in many ways. Thanks to the Network East meeting, I have made a lot of friends and am truly glad for the work being done by CC. I do appreciate the struggle CC has gone through to survive. Till this day and forever.

THANKS also to my friends in CC for guiding me and helping me in many ways to make my trip to Bangkok and Hong Kong a pleasurable and memorable one. There I met up with members of the Long Yang Club in Bangkok and Contact Magazine and Horizons in Hong Kong, and exchanged our magazine with theirs.

— Dominick, Visakhapatnam

Enough of 'straight' images

I'm an advocate in my early 30s, and getting really bored with all the heterosexual images appearing in the visual and print media. There is practically nothing circulated to satisfy the wants and cater to the interests of persons with "alternative" sexual preferences. It is only through publications like Naya Pravartak that a gay person can read, communicate and appreciate the thoughts, needs, ideas and aspirations of other likeminded persons.

I firmly believe that an honest, sincere and caring gay person has more to offer to society than what is actually believed.

— Rajdeep, Guwahati

Job well done

I was very happy to see the "jobs available" ads in the sixth issue of Naya Pravartak. It is a great way to unify, strengthen and dignify our community. I will suggest "Darpan" to think on these lines also, especially because a lot of gays in Delhi are very resourceful people.

— Amit, New Delhi

Editor: "Darpan" is the newsletter published by the newly formed gay support group in New Delhi called Humaraa.

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READERS PLEASE NOTE: For any payment to Counsel Club, do not send cash with your letters.

If you are not in a position to pay through cheque/demand draft, or if the amount is too small to be paid through cheque/DD, send postage stamps worth the amount to be paid. This will be considered equivalent to a cash payment.

ALSO please note: Counsel Club is not in a position to receive money order payments as these are not accepted on a post bag address.

— Editor
TEEN MATTERS

Young person in full bloom

The teen years! Time when one encounters changes in one’s mind, emotions and body. Growing up to be a healthy, responsible and thinking person involves understanding these changes and taking good care of one’s mental/emotional and physical health. And we are here to help our teenage readers do just that! If you have any query, problem, idea or information related to growing up issues, share it with us and other readers on this page. Write in to: Naya Pravartak, C/o Pawan, Post Bag No. 10237, Calcutta 700 019. Superscribe your envelope: TEEN MATTERS Good Luck!

— Editor

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COVER FEATURE

Network East

Context
Counsel Club was started in August 1993 with the idea of building a support group for gay people anywhere and everywhere. However, the focus was to be on those in Calcutta and its neighbouring areas. While cities like Bombay, New Delhi, Hyderabad and Bangalore already had a strong gay network, Calcutta did not have anything similar, at least not in an organised way.

Over the last few years Counsel Club has tried to remedy the situation — without necessarily copying the groups in other cities. It has had some success in bringing together gay people in the city, but has also realised the need for a network for the entire eastern region of the country. Hence Network East.

Day 1
Introductory Session
The Network East 1997 programme began with a brief welcome address by overall facilitator Pawan. Nupur Basu of CINI-Cherana Resource Centre (the conference venue) was also present, besides co-overall facilitator Sanjay and the other participants.

Speaking about the essence of Network East, Pawan said that it was more than a one-time event. It was a process which had begun with the birth of Counsel Club itself, and that it would carry on even after the Network East 1997 conference had ended — the conference being a tool to facilitate networking rather than an end in itself.

NAYA PRAVARTAK JAN-JUL'97
Working Session I Reports

Group I

Our discussion did not separate the two key words “attraction” and “same sex”, since for this context, the two had to be discussed together.

We began by discussing personal experiences. When did you first find out you were attracted to someone of the same sex? Was it attraction for a particular person or general? Was it primarily physical / primarily emotional / both physical and emotional?

For most people, the attraction was for a particular person to begin with. Then it slowly developed into a general attraction for people of the same sex. Also, to begin with, people were not really confident of their attraction / sexuality — but slowly with time, and good sex, and friends, one developed confidence.

It was discussed if it was possible for two gay people to have a continuous and fulfilling relationship without any sex at all. May be, may be not.

Group III

First, we discussed “attraction” in general. Attraction can be for an author, teacher, children, parents, friends etc. Also attraction can be physical / sexual / emotional.

As of ourselves (gay), we are attracted to our own sex. It (attraction) can be mental or physical which leads to sex. At times a mixture of the two leads to sex. Solely physical attraction leads to a short term relationship. But for a long term relationship, emotional attraction is a must.

Even if one is not attracted to another gay person, still there is a feeling of oneness because there is something in common.

This feeling is not strong because there is no social structure to support this emotional bonding.

Working Session II Reports

PART A

Group I

It was found that we are really not clear about sexuality. Sexual orientation is fine — it can be defined unambiguously. However, sexuality is too personal a thing to be defined precisely. One could probably say that sexuality is an overall thing — the way a person’s being is influenced by his sexual orientation and society’s reaction to it. One could say that the ripples caused by one’s sexual orientation and its interaction with society comprise one’s sexuality.

The causes of sexual orientation were discussed — genetic, by birth, hormonal, by choice, by constraint. However, the last is probably sexual behaviour and not orientation. But do we need to know the answer at all? Nobody asks what caused heterosexuality? I am gay because I am gay — and we go ahead from here to work for the community.

Group II

Attraction, desire and sexuality are three inter-related concepts. It is difficult to say attraction or desire, which leads to our sexuality. On the other hand, sexuality includes both desire and attraction.

PART B

Group I

Note the use “our sexualities”. Since it is so personal, we have to use the plural. We need a name so that we exist and we have to talk intelligently about ourselves.

Various names were discussed the word “homosexual” can be seen as very positive because it shows that the only difference society finds between us and straight people is our sexual behaviour — that’s why they put that in our name.

Group III

Names? Yes, we need names. There is no need to invent “new” names (codes) as the “new” names become old very fast. Moreover the existing names should be used to preserve and/or establish our identity. Names should be used to establish the community. It is helpful to unite under a name or banner.

Working Session III Report

It was decided by consensus that this session would not be held in groups.

Instead all the participants would sit in one circle and share their experiences.

“I have a lot of family problems. My sisters are all married now, and my widowed mother is pressuring me to get married. I live in a small place. And everyone is asking why I’m not getting married. I don’t want to live with a woman. We don’t have groups or anything where I live. I don’t have too many friends. So I’m quite isolated. Once a man cheated me. He told me he will give me books, magazines etc. After that he tried to sleep with me. I refused. So he left me. Some people only want sex. I want friendship.”

“Maintaining self-respect is important. Support groups can help us do that.”

“Being gay in England isn’t any easier than in India.”

Day 2

Introductory Session

The second day began with the participants sharing their impressions of the first day and night. The participants seemed to be in different moods, but the general feeling was one of looking forward to the second day’s agenda.

Working Session I Report

The session was chaired by participants Deep, Paul and Ranjan. All three were associated with NAYA Calcutta Project, an HIV/AIDS Education and Support service. The three fielded questions asked by the other participants on a range of issues.

For those who wanted to remain anonymous, a question bag was provided in which they could drop in their questions.

The session began with a discussion on sexual health and safer
sex, and the difference between
them. Sexual health is a holistic
concept related to mental health,
physical health as well as social
aspects of having sex...

Safer sex, on the other hand, is a
part of sexual health. It is a means
of maintaining one's physical
health, that is, preventing the
transmission of diseases/infections during sex...

Sexual health can also be
achieved through networking.
Isolated people get a chance to meet
others like them, share their
feelings, feel better about themselves
and have better mental and physical health.
That, in its turn, enables
them to have more fulfilling sex...

Most of the questions asked by
the participants dealt with the physical
aspects of sex rather than the mental
or emotional aspects. But then it is
difficult to isolate problems as
"physical" or "mental."

For instance, a part of the
discussion delved into the problem of
premature ejaculation which is quite
common. Questions on HIV/AIDS
and STDs also figured prominently.

The discussion ended with a
demonstration of how to use a
condom properly — how to put it on,
how to take it off, how to dispose of it
off, what to look for while buying one etc.

Also, what lubrication to use
and why. For the record, the
demonstration was carried out using
a dildo!

Working Session II Reports

Group II

WHAT? Our society, creating a
group for ourselves, communes,
forming a group among like-minded
persons, a common platform.

WHY? For trust, dependency,
support, help, sharing, caring,
opportunity to express one's views
and feelings, self-esteem, love,
affection, bonding. Besides,
organisations are more reliable than
individuals.

HOW? Through communication.
Involvement would lead to corre-
respondence, assembling, contributing
towards the organisation by sharing
responsibilities, building up commit-
tment and motivation.

We have to start off NOW.

WHERE? Regional groups are
needed.

WHO? Like-minded people, with a
shared identity.

Communication will have to be for
the members of the community, by
them and of them.

The idea is to create a "safety net"
through networking among friends,
that is, communication among them.
If the network is able to help a friend
in trouble, it will mean that the net
works!

One of our group members from
Orissa said that a regional network
could be created in Orissa.

Other highlights

- Documentary "Before Stonewall"
screened on Day 1.
- Role playing sessions on Day 2.
- Music and dance programme on
  Day 2.

The conference was rounded off
with a few words of thanks and goodbye.
As well as the reminder that though
the conference had ended, Network East
as a process would go on.

For copies of the Network East
Report, write to: Counsel Club,
C/o Pawan, Post Bag No. 10237,
Calcutta 700 019. Limited number
available.

REPORT

The first retreat

- The following report was received
  earlier this year with a letter
  formally announcing the existence
  of Stree Sangam, a Bombay-based
group of lesbian and bisexual women.
  Its members first got together in April
  1995, when some 35 women met each
  other for the first time at a weekend
  picnic. Since April 1995, the group's
  members have faced many ups and
downs in moving forward together,
especially since they were all from
diverse backgrounds and profes-
sions.

The biggest achievement for
the group was when it organised a
national level meeting for lesbian and
bisexual women in June 1996 (cov-
ered in the following report).

Since the June 1996 meeting, the
group has been having regular
monthly meetings at the residences
of its members. Counsel Club and
Naya Pravartak wish Stree Sangam
the very best for its endeavours.

— Editor

I t finally happened — a three
day gathering, June 7-9, 1996,
of women who love women —
the first of its kind in India. The
retreat was organised by the Stree
Sangam group, a collective of
lesbian and bisexual women in
Bombay, and for many of us, was the
realisation of a long-held dream.
Thirty of us, mainly from Bombay
and Delhi and a couple from Pune
and Bangalore, came together on a
beach near Bombay for three days
to share our lives, our loves, and
our concerns.

The place was beautiful and so
were the women and the spaces
that we could create in these three
days. We walked about in groups,
in pairs, alone, on the sands near
the water, we talked and shared,
dated, danced, slept, flirted, were
ourselves among women like us. There
were discussions and group sharing
sessions which almost all of us
took to and there were poetry
readings and film shows. The Delhi
group had brought over a bunch of
films and some of us
spent parts of the evenings and the
nights watching them. The Bombay
group had moved its library and
documents to the retreat and some
documents were sent by the
Bangalore group too. Some of us
spent time looking through them.

The first day we all gathered by
lunch time and had our first
marvellous meal together. Then we
had an informal sort of opening,
with introductions and a dis-

The first workshop/session was
on sharing our lives and experi-
ences, especially our coming out stories
and processes, how we felt about

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being where we were today and what our concerns were. We talked at length about our various relationships. Some of us spoke about coming out to parents or their finding out and the subsequent traumas, being single, being together with one person, breaking up, jealousies, monogamy and non-monogamy, our journeys to the places we are at today.

We spoke from varying back grounds and perspectives. Some of us were in our late thirties and forties and shared our experiences of the pressures and the choices taken in lives in a changing world. Some were as young as twenty and as we talked we discovered the differences over the period of time and we also discovered the things that hadnt changed. We exchanged laughter over crushes, hostel love stories, discovering “it”. We shared the joy we felt in relating with women, in loving and being loved by each other. But we also exchanged our disillusionments, our bitter breakings, heartbreak, loneliness, our pain and traumas which sprang also from our most intimate relationships with women.

Later on in the next two days we also talked about sexuality, safe sex, lesbians/bisexuals and AIDS, looking different, poetry, parents, organising and the politics and dynamics of collectives, networking, sharing network lists, the importance of reaching out to as many women as we can, ways and strategies of doing this, some brief reportings on lesbians and the law and in what ways we can fight for our rights.

At nights we romanced, danced, fought, and talked some more. Some of us actually got some sleep. Many of us who had worked hard to put this retreat together had to miss sessions and do organising especially around food and by the end of the day needed some rest. By the end of the three days, we did not want to leave and felt that this time together was too brief and wished it had been at least five days to a week. We left affirming another such meeting soon to be organised by the Delhi group. We left feeling that we had shared immensely and been together. And also that there were differences which were not always openly stated or shared about as comfortably.

We left feeling that we had just begun a conversation and had left a lot unsaid. A conversation which we came to from different paths, having covered different journeys, some of which we could share and some we could not. Yet our coming together was a confluence, a meeting that created spaces that are most important for us - individually and collectively.

We hope this confluence grows. That we can create this joy, this space, for more and more women.

For women who love women.

Stree Sangam
Post Box No. 16613
Matunga, Bombay 400 019.
E-mail: inforum@giashm01.vsnl.net.in

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The little pink book

- The heading refers to one of the most valuable documents in Counsellor Club’s collection of books and journals. A book smaller in size than the journal. With the main title set in a not-so-bold typeface on a modest pink cover. And the printing inside far from reader-friendly. Nothing to make it stand out. Except for its name which has never failed to spark off a gleam in many a “gay eye”.

“Less Than Gay : A Citizens’ Report on the Status of Homosexuality in India” - published by the New Delhi-based AIDS Shishubhav Virodhi Andolan (see profile under Nasami, page 22 in November 1991 - is indeed a “little book” with a “big deal” about it. Meticulous in its presentation of facts, unrelenting in its questioning attitude and thorough in its arguments, it has served as a treat to many minds starved for a book that would deal with homosexuality in an empathetic manner.

Though not the first Indian book to focus entirely on homosexuality (the honour for that, at least in modern times, probably would go to Shashikant Devi’s “The World of Homosexuals”), it remains till date the most comprehensive account of the status of homosexuality in India.

The book grabbed considerable media attention when it was published, though it failed to register with the powers-that-be whose stand on homosexuality it has questioned in good measure.

Beginning with this issue, we present to you a series of excerpts from the book.

 Editor

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these views can stand the test of empirical reality or plain and simple common sense.

The emergence of AIDS as a major public health crisis has had a devastating effect on gay people in most parts of the world. Gay people have been blamed for the spread of the disease, condemned as sinners deserving to die, and denied safer sex information vital to their survival. Like women in prostitution, professional blood donors, and intravenous drug users, gay men and lesbians stand already marginalised in relation to the law, the medical establishment and the police. As a result, they are easily scapegoated and blamed for the advent and spread of AIDS. Though there is no inherent link between AIDS and homosexuality, it has become more necessary than ever before to understand the status of homosexuality in our society.

What is homosexuality? Is it a distinct sexual experience confined to a small minority of the population? Is "gay" a Western concept, an upper-class obsession? How is homosexuality linked to heterosexuality? To the institutions of marriage and family? Why does it become a cause for ridicule? What do Indian culture, heritage, religion and literature say about it? How does the modern Indian state attempt to regulate homosexuality? What is its status in law and medical science? In the eyes of the police? Can a right to privacy be read into the Indian Constitution and deployed to protect homosexual sexual acts? What are the human rights violations experienced by gay men and lesbians? What is gay life like for different strata of people in Indian society?

Few coherent answers exist to these questions. The deep stigma that attaches to homosexuality keeps these issues from being publicly discussed in any meaningful way. Our report is an attempt to define an agenda for a public debate around homosexuality in India.

Brief Background of ABVA

The members of AIDS Bhedbhav Virodi Andolan (ABVA) have been running a free dispensary amongst women in prostitution at G.B. Road, Delhi's red-light district, for the last three years. The team includes Dr. J.P. Jain (Nagrik Mahamari Janch Samiti), Lalitha S.A. (Joint Women's Programme), Shalini SCN (Indian Social Institute), Jagdish Bhardwaj, Founder Secretary, Blood Donor Welfare Association (India), a professional blood donor of ten years' standing, involved for the last six years in the struggle of professional blood donors, Siddhartha Gautam, advocate, Delhi High Court, Arun Bhandari (Ankur), and Dr. P.S. Sohni (Jagat Mata Kusha Ashram).

ABVA got involved in AIDS activism in 1989 on hearing from women in the red-light area that doctors from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) had forcibly tested them for HIV (the virus thought to cause AIDS) with the help of the police. ABVA protested this action, asking that good quality condoms, humane treatment and rehabilitation schemes for HIV positive people be made a prerequisite for any government screening for HIV.

Our group was instrumental in stalling the draconian AIDS (Prevention) Bill, 1989 through petitions in Parliament, public meetings, protest actions and networking both in India and abroad. As a result, the Bill now lies for review before a Joint Parliamentary Committee.

ABVA has organized several protests against the government's policies on testing, confidentiality and discrimination linked to AIDS.

All throughout, ABVA has tried hard to broad-base its work by mobilising other voluntary groups and community people including people with leprosy, women in prostitution, women from slums around Delhi, and gay people. We have also regularly met with concerned officials of Delhi Administration and the Union Government, and submitted memos to relevant authorities. With the help of Shobha Aggarwal, an activist lawyer, we have been able to offer free legal assistance to women in prostitution who were arrested in 1990 under the Juvenile Justice Act.

ABVA has also brought out two citizen's reports to date - "Women and AIDS: Denial and Blame, A Citizen's Report on AIDS in India", November 1990 (in English and Hindi) and "Blood of the Professionals - a report on the situation of professional blood donors in India", July 1991. (In English).

The Present Report

While preparing this report, our group went through a long educational process, reading, interviewing, discussing, and arguing about homosexuality. This was an area about which many of us were ill informed and even prejudiced to begin with. Our conversations with a number of gay men and lesbians from different backgrounds revealed the richness and variety of gay life as also the fear and vulnerability around it. We worked systematically to bring to the surface our own discomfort, myths, and queries about sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular. In a short time, we found, the myths were easily demolished. If this report can expose the silly lie that homosexuality does not exist in India, or that gay people are a species from a different planet, we will feel our efforts rewarded.

Professionals hold the key to social change and their views and interventions can influence ordinary citizens. Accordingly, we tried to elicit a response on homosexuality from academicians, doctors, lawyers, women's groups, human rights organizations, politicians, bureaucrats, police personnel, and others through letters and personal meetings.

While gathering printed material on the subject, we found little definitive information available on the Indian situation. At most libraries, we would reach a dead end and suspect the operation of some sort of 'censorship'. For example, the copy of the original Kamasiutra, which has a chapter on homosexuality, was discovered to be loaned out for the last four years by the Delhi Public Library to none other than the Union Health Ministry. Library staff at several places showed great embarrassment at our requests for material pertaining to homosexuality. Dr. Gulab Khan, librarian at the Information Centre, Connaught Place, New Delhi gave us much support and encouragement. Malini Gosh, Kat Freise, and Parveen Sikand provided invaluable...
Towards two

My destination was unknown.
I sat under a tree
Thinking a lot, worrying more.
Soon it was dusk, and as I
Decided to leave, I was greeted
By a yellowish leaf.
I thought again —
Was it a joke,
Or was it just my bad luck?
Rejecting it, I forced myself to
Move towards the dusk.
Alone.

— Arghya

Reaching you

The magma exploded with deafening sound
The volcano erupted with fire
The earth shook from its peaceful sleep
The leaves withered before the autumn call.

The lava burnt the path it travelled
The lane of fire became ready
Why then did you make me walk on it?
You knew that I would get burnt.

You were on the other side
The only passion I had was you within
What if my mind had slipped?
The fire path made blisters, see.

I reached the other side half burnt
But what was the use,
When you too were already burnt to ash?

— Dipankar

Living life positively

The author, in his early 30s, lives in Madras and has known he is HIV-positive since 1993.

I was just another young man with a future to dream about. I was doing business and was well settled. But my family wanted me to get married and they chose a girl. A friend of mine told me about AIDS, but as I was homosexual I had never had sex with a prostitute so I thought I couldn’t get infected. But he told me that AIDS also spreads through sex between men. So I went to hospital for the test. I was never given any counselling, and after a week they just handed me the result — I was HIV-positive.

“At first, I thought I was going to die that night, or in a week at most. I wanted to commit suicide. I didn’t know how to face my parents, but I decided to go and tell my whole family. They all started crying, and my brothers threw me out of the house because they were afraid of being infected through me. My grandmother took me in, and for three months I was given food through a window.

Then a friend heard about me and informed his office, the Community AIDS Network (CAN). A counsellor visited my parents and explained how I could continue to live within the family. They accepted me again, and I started having hope again. I started going to CAN as a volunteer, and then joined the project as an outreach worker. I started going to the cruising places for men who have sex with men, and talking about AIDS, STDs, and the need for condoms with anal sex.

“At first people didn’t believe me. They wouldn’t even believe I was HIV-positive. So I started talking on the radio and television, and also to newspapers. The result was electrifying. Suddenly people realised that AIDS was not something distant, but was amongst them. I think I was the first homosexual in the country to publicly declare myself HIV-positive.

“But some people were angry, especially the all (transsexuals) and men who sell sex to other men — they were losing clients because of me. But things died down. People started asking me questions about STDs and AIDS, condoms, and HIV testing. I started doing counselling at HIV testing centres, where I met more people with HIV, and we decided to form a support group called Ahab Aloyan (‘Temple of Love’). We support one another, and we also work for HIV prevention, especially by persuading people who test HIV-positive not to spread the virus deliberately out of a sense of revenge.

“My family has been ostracised because of me, but what does that matter compared with all those who will be saved from AIDS because I’ve come out into the open? I’ve received letters from many people who say that my life has been a lesson for them. That’s what gives me the courage to go on. I am living my life positively and I will continue to contribute my bit in this struggle against AIDS.”

HIV AND AIDS

Some Basic Facts

AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) was first identified in 1981. It is caused by the virus HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), which reduces the capacity of the body's defences (or immune system) to combat infections.

There is generally a time lag of several years - even 10 years or more - between the initial infection and the start of AIDS. Without a blood test, it is usually not possible to be certain whether a person has HIV. Most people with HIV do not know they are infected; they generally look and feel absolutely normal. There is still no vaccine against HIV and no cure for AIDS. Although most AIDS-related illnesses can usually be treated with standard medicines, the advanced stage of AIDS inevitably leads to death.

HIV spreads in three ways:
1. Through sexual intercourse
2. Through blood
3. From mother to child

Sexual intercourse: Worldwide, about 75% of all HIV infections occur through sexual intercourse when one or other partner has HIV. The risk of spreading HIV is greatly increased when other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are present. Women are physically more vulnerable than men to STDs, including HIV.

Blood: The use of blood contaminated with HIV for transfusions carries a very high risk of spreading the virus. HIV can also spread easily when people share needles and syringes to inject themselves with drugs. If one user has HIV, the small amount of blood which he or she leaves in the needle or syringe will be injected into the bloodstream of the next user, who may also get HIV.

Mother to child: HIV can be passed on from a mother to her child during pregnancy, at the time of delivery or through breastfeeding. However, in countries with high infant mortality, where bottle feeding carries a high risk of disease and death, WHO and UNICEF recommend that mothers with HIV should still be encouraged to breastfeed their babies.

Safe and unsafe behaviour

HIV cannot be transmitted through coughing or sneezing; through saliva, tears or sweat; by shaking hands; by sharing eating and drinking utensils; telephones, bathrooms or toilets; by mosquitoes or other insects; by walking barefoot where people have spat; or by living or working with a person who has AIDS or HIV infection.

Sexual intercourse between two people who do not have HIV and are completely faithful to each other carries no risk at all of spreading HIV.

If one partner has HIV, sex in which the penis enters the vagina or the anus carries a high risk of spreading the virus. Oral sex carries a lower risk. This risk can be greatly reduced by using a condom every time. HIV is not spread by other forms of physical contact such as kissing, cuddling, fondling, caressing or massaging.


SAFER SEX

Herpes help!

TODAY a lot is being said about HIV/AIDS and to some extent Hepatitis B. But herpes is another scourge which deserves attention.

Indeed, all sexually active people need to know the facts about herpes. Male who have sex with males, gay-identified or not, cannot be an exception. And people who have sex with both males and females need to be just as aware.

HERPES is an inflammation of the skin which makes itself known by the formation of painful blisters. At least five types of herpes viruses that infect humans have been identified. The most common and most talked about these days - the herpes simplex virus (HSV) - is the one we are going to focus on.

HSV can be transmitted sexually during oral sex (stimulating the genitals with the mouth or tongue), vaginal sex, anal sex, rimming (licking the anus) and sometimes kissing as well. The virus affects the area of contact - usually the mouth, vagina, penis or anus.

Symptoms of HSV infection are:

- Small painful blisters on or around the genital area, on the face and the lips.
- Tingling/itching in the genital area.
- General flu-like symptoms such as headache, backache or a temperature.
- Pain or burning sensation while urinating.

These symptoms appear usually within one to two weeks after infection. The blisters usually heal within a week or two, but may take several weeks before they disappear.

After the blisters clear up, the virus becomes inactive, but remains in the body for life. In most cases, the virus can get reactivated, causing similar symptoms, usually in the same area. The repeat outbreaks of herpes are often less severe than the first one.

Why the recurrences? Several reasons are cited by doctors - sunlight, heat, tight clothing, menstruation, stress, fatigue and fever. The exact reason is not known.

Prevention: An important point to note here is that in some cases of HSV infection the blisters may not show up at all or may get cleared up, but the infected person can still pass on the virus. And given that unprotected sexual contact even once is enough to get or pass on the infection, it is important to:

- Abstain from sex altogether at the most contagious stage - that is when the blisters are present.
- Avoid unprotected sexual contact even if there are no apparent signs of herpes by using:
  - A condom during anal and vaginal sex. (Proper lubrication with a water-based lubricant is necessary to prevent a condom from tearing)
  - A condom during male-to-male and female-to-male oral sex (that is, sucking the penis). In case of male-to-female and female-to-female oral sex (that is, licking the vagina), a little improvisation is called for. A condom cut down the side (using a fresh blade) and laid flat against the vagina can act as a barrier against oral transmission. The condom should never be flipped over, and a new piece should be used every time. The same

Continued on page 38
Please send us your listing as you want it to appear in print. We may need to edit your listing. Each appearance of the listing will cost Rs. 20. Send cash or postage stamps. There is no charge for Counsel Club members. Non-member readers abroad may send a nominal amount (in US$) as donation towards Counsel Club. For prompt response, use a personal mailing address - residential or a post box/bag number at the local P.O. If you don't want your address printed, we will forward your mail. You will be given an advertisement code number. All mail to be forwarded to an advertiser with a code number should be sealed in a STAMPED envelope. Only the advertiser's name and code number need be written on the front of the envelope. Place this in another envelope addressed to Counsel Club. Please remember that Naya Pravartak is read by non-guys also. We take no responsibility for what happens as a result of meeting people through Naya Pravartak. Please reply to any response as a gesture of courtesy. Naya Pravartak reserves the right to refuse a listing. Send your listing/mail for forwarding to Naya Pravartak. C/o Pawan. Post: Bag No. 10237, Calcutta 700019.

READERS PLEASE NOTE: Each appearance of a listing will cost Rs. 20 from the next issue onwards of Naya Pravartak

24-YEAR old Tibetan lesbian looking for friendship with all lesbians. Working for an export company. Hobbies include photography, writing poems and light music. But most of all I value and enjoy the intimacy of creative, caring friends. Write to: D D Bhutta, P.O. Box 142, GPO, New Delhi 110 001.

SWEET talkative, humorous guy of 25 wants a decent partner/lover in the age group 28 to 35 years. Loves cooking, slow music and writing letters. Looking forward to meeting a pleasant-looking and understanding person. Write to: Dominick, P.O. Box 263, HPO, Visakhapatnam 530 001.

22-YEAR old, 5' 5" tall student would like a sincere young man to correspond with - for friendship and love. I have a sense of humour and enjoy almost everything. I'm fond of music, art, cooking and travelling. Be my mental and physical partner. Age and looks no bar. Confidentiality expected and assured. Write with photo to: Debashis Chakraborty, 35 R.K. Chatterjee Road, Calcutta 700 042.

GAY man from Australia: 45 years. 179 cm. 78 kg, clean shaven, black hair with a bit of grey, hairy chest, AIDS-free. Interests include short wave radio, computers, reading (mainly history) and writing to other guys interested in writing to gay Indians and finding out more about India. Write to: Vincent Dalton, P.O. Box 88, Hindmarsh SA 5007, Australia. E-mail: vinda@wanthtree.com.au.

HELLO! I'm Joy (27), interested in warm friendships with young men of age 18 to 28. Your letter (preferably with phone no.) will be responded to. My interests are reading, watching movies and having sex in water. Write to: Joy (New Delhi). (Code No. 8D)

HELLO! I'm looking for handsome friends from Calcutta. I'm 30 years young, handsome, holding a good post in a reputed company. Write to: S. (Calcutta) with contact number and photograph (if possible). Reply assured. (Code No. 8H).

HELLO! I'm 23 year old guy, interested in everything under the sun and looking forward to a healthy future with guys with a big heart. Guys in the age group 18 to 30 years preferred. Write to: AG (Calcutta). (Code No. 8A)

HELLO there! I'm Ashish from Calcutta. 28 years old, 5' 5", exclusively gay, affectionate, with a good sense of humour and multitalented. I love music and films. I'm interested in an intimate alliance with an exclusively gay or bisexual man (any age between 18 and 50). (Code No. 8C)

HI! I'm the never-fading rays of the sun. Yes, that's exactly what my name Amlan Kiran means. I'm sweet 18. You could be anyone, anywhere. Write to: Amlan (Calcutta). (Code No. 8B)

I'M 33, firm and straightforward - a blend of the romantic and the realist you might say. Sex is important, but not the ultimate for me. If you are understanding, frank and firm, below 30 and at least moderately pleasant looking and in need of a reliable friend, you can write to Niranjali (Calcutta). (Code No. 8E)

I AM looking for people interested in true friendship, who are cheerful and outgoing by nature. My hobbies include almost everything. So if you want to be my friend, do drop me a line. Write to: Nirmalya (Calcutta). (Code No. 8F).

WITH a moustache, blackish skin. Am 25, hairy and slim. Modest, simple, straightforward. Soft, affectionate and sober. Looking for a friend? Hey you guys! Of similar nature, must reply! Honest friend, truest sage. All are welcome, regardless of age. Walk forward and drop a line. Just to build a friendship fine. Write to: Ritwik (Asansol). (Code No. 8G)
INDIA

**AASRA;** P.O. Box 68, G.P.O., Patna 800 001. Gay support group.

**ABVA (AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan);** Post Box No. 5308, New Delhi 110 053. Community work in issues of education, health, law, women, gay people, professional blood donors and drug abuse. Members meet Wednesdays, 6:30–9 pm, at Indian Coffee House, Connaught Place.

**APDR (Association for People’s Democratic Rights);** 18 Madan Boral Lane, Calcutta 700 012. (033) 27 6459 (weekdays, 6–8 pm). An all-Bengal voluntary organisation working for civil rights action and awareness building.

**BOMBAJ DOST;** 105 Veena Beena Shopping Centre, Opp. Bandra Station, Bandra (W), Bombay 400 050. Gay and lesbian support group; publishes magazine 'Bombar Dost.' If you are in eastern India, contact Counsel Club for copies.


**CINI (Child in Need Institute);** Vill: Desulapur, P.O. Pailani Hat, Vin Joka, 24 Parganas (S), Pin: 743 512. (033) 467 1205/5192. NGO providing health care services for vulnerable communities, especially children.

**CINI ASHA;** 63 Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, Calcutta 700 016. (033) 245 2705/6262. The urban project of CINI; works with street and working children.

**EXPRESSION;** P.O. Box No. 5, Bolaram Post Office, Secunderabad 500 010. Gay support group.

**FRIENDS INDIA;** P.O. Box No. 56, Mahanagar, Lucknow 226 006. An AIDS awareness and counselling group - for men who love men; publishes periodical 'Sacred Love.'

**GOOD AS YOU;** C/o Samaraksha, 201 Royal Corner, 2nd floor, 1&2 Lalbag Road, Bangalore 560 027. Gay support group; meets Thursdays, 6:30–8 pm.

**HUMRAHI;** C/E Green Park Extension, New Delhi 110 016. Postal address: P.O. Box 3910, Andreas Gunj, New Delhi 110 049. (011) 265 1970/1937. Less-bi-gay group; publishes newsletter 'Darpan'; runs tele-counselling service 'Humrahi' on 685 9113 – Mondays and Thursdays, 7–9 pm. Meets first, third, fifth Saturdays, 7–8 pm.

**HUMSAFAR TRUST;** Post Box No. 6913, Santacruz (W), Bombay 410 054. Associate NGO of Bombay Dost; runs helpline 'Humnasfar Ki Aawaz' on 992 9913 (voice mail service) and the 'Humnasfar Drop-In Centre' for gay men.

**JABALA;** 6A Outram Street, Calcutta 700 017. Works with women and children of the Bow Bazar red light area in north Calcutta.

**PSI/INDIA (Population Services International/India);** Post Box 7360, C-446 Chittaranjan Park, New Delhi 110 019. (011) 261 8529/8688. Voluntary organisation assisting the government in HIV/AIDS prevention, family planning and maternal and child health. Publishes newsletter 'Nexus' focusing on maternal, child and reproductive health issues, sex, sexuality, STDs and AIDS.

**SAATHI;** P.O. Box 761, Puthi Bowli, Hyderabad 500 095. Gay support group. Chapter in Cuttack: P.O. Box 512, Chandni Chowk, H.P.O., Cuttack 753 002.

**SAMIKSHANI;** 37 South End Park, Calcutta 700 029. (033) 466 3504. Centre for psychoanalytical studies and mental therapy; provides training in psychotherapy.

**SNEHA SANGAM;** P.O. Box 3250, R.T. Nagar, Bangalore 560 032. Gay men's support group.

**STREE SANGAM;** Post Box No. 16113, Matunga, Bombay 400 019. E-mail: infomail@iasbam.org. A collective of lesbian and bisexual women.

**STD/HIV INTERVENTION PROGRAMME;** (Sonagachi, Bow Bazar and Kallighat red light areas); C/o All India Institute of Hygiene & Public Health, 110 Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta 700 073.

**THE NAZ CALCUTTA PROJECT;** 20 Alipore Road, Calcutta 700 028. An HIV/AIDS and sexual health education and support service.

**THE NAZ FOUNDATION (INDIA) TRUST;** P.O. Box 3910, Andreas Gunj, New Delhi 110 049. (011) 265 9113. An HIV/AIDS and sexual health agency.

**THOUGHTSHOP FOUNDATION;** 25 Maurya Centre, 48 Garisahat Road, Calcutta 700 019. Social communication agency, with focus on sexual health and reproductive health communication aimed at young people.

**ABROAD**

**ASIANS & FRIENDS-SYDNEY;** P.O. Box 238, Darlington, NSW 2010, Australia. Support group for gay Asian men and their friends; publishes newsletter 'South Pacific Pearl.'

**COMPANIONS ON A JOURNEY;** P.O. Box 48, Wattala, Sri Lanka, support group for gay men and lesbians.

**GLPCI NETWORK;** C/o GLPCI Publications Office, P.O. Box No. 4206, Montclair, NJ 07043, USA. Newsletter of the Gay & Lesbian Parents Coalition International.


**ILGA (International Lesbian & Gay Association);** C/o Antenne Rose, 15 rue Marche-aux-charbon, B-1000 Bruxelles 1, Belgium.

**POPULATION INFORMATION PROGRAM;** The John Hopkins School of Public Health, 111 Market Place, Suite 310, Baltimore, Maryland 21202-4012, USA. Publishes periodical 'Population Reports' focusing on the important developments worldwide in the population field.

**SHAKTI;** P.O. Box 33, 22a Seymour Place, London, W1H 5WJ, UK. Support group for South Asian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual people. Publishes quarterly periodical 'Shakti Aawaz.'

**THE NAZ FOUNDATION;** 214 King Street, London W6 9LP, UK. (0181) 563 0152. An international HIV/AIDS and sexual health agency for the South Asian, Turkish, Italian and Arab communities; publishes newsletter 'Na Ki Pukaar.'

**TRIKNONE;** P.O. Box 21354, San Jose, CA 95154-21354, USA. (408) 270 8776. E-mail: trikone@rahat.net. Support and social group for lesbian, gay and bisexual South Asians. Publishes 'Trikone Magazine' four times a year. Contact Humnasfar Trust, Bombay for subscription in India.
COUNSEL CLUB PROFILE

Counsel Club started with five members in August 1993. Today, four years later, the membership strength has grown several fold. The all-time membership list (which includes current as well as past members) has more than 120 names on it! Members Pawan and Ranjan delve into the files and bring you nuggets of information about where these members are...their age profile...their occupations...and much more.*

PLACE OF RESIDENCE

- India : 107
- Abroad : 13

In India (regionwise):

- E : 66%
- S : 10%
- W : 9%
- N : 15%

AGE PROFILE

(Guesstimate figures)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51+</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SEX PROFILE

- Male members : 103
- Female members : 17

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

(As known to/understood by the surveyors. No written data available to support figures given)

- Gay members (including bisexuals):
  - Males : 100
  - Females : 11
- Non-gay members
  - Males : 3
  - Females : 6

OCCUPATIONS

(Top 5)

- Service-holders : 22
- Students : 14
- Business : 12
- Social work/development work and teaching : 6 each
- Journalism : 5

WHERE NAYA PRAVARTAK # 7 WENT

(Total 201 copies)

- Eastern India : 119
  (Of which Calcutta : 90)
- Western India : 14
- Northern India : 28
- Southern India : 10
- Abroad : 30
  (Of which USA : 19)

* Data based on all-time membership list for 15/8/93 to 13/7/97. Total strength as of 13/7/97 : 120. Including Naya Pravartak-only subscribers and special members.

THIS AD IS FOR GAYZINYZAG !

Oops...that should be GAYZ IN YZAG.
Or, rather GAYS IN VIZAG.
But are there gays in Visakhapatnam?
Sure there are!

Here’s one calling all gay people in Visakhapatnam!
Let’s get together to beat the loneliness and work for happier times!
S-P-R-E-A-D the word!
XYZAGAYZ...sorry...ex-Vizag gay people are also welcome to write in.

ZIP YOUR LETTERS TO:
Dominick, P.O. Box 203,
HPO, Visakhapatnam 530 001.
How green was our city?

A MILLION SPACES LOST: Calcutta is set to lose a major chunk of greenery — this time to a water tank. The construction of the underground tank will involve cutting down a large number of trees and eat up considerable “walking space” in an important south Calcutta park. The skyline and landscape of the park will change, but will it be for the better? Given the speed at which work in Calcutta progresses, it will be a number of years before the walking space can be regained. Till then (and perhaps beyond), the city will have to settle for a little less “openness”!

Medley of happenings

JANUARY witnessed a solemn launch of the Counsel Club Employment Scheme. The scheme, which has had modest success so far, but it symbolises a big step towards Counsel Club becoming a stronger and more committed support group. More about the scheme when it has completed at least a year!

WHAT was next? Network East of course! But read about that in the Cover Feature (pages 7-10).

MARCH saw a Holi gathering at member Hem’s place drive away the blues from the members’ minds. Anik Ashari, complete with a mimic majra by members Gopal, Rana and Amlan, made the gathering one of the best ever at Hem’s place. (The hallowed drawing room where the party took place and which hosted Counsel Club’s monthly meetings for three eventful years is now sadly out of bounds. See Periscope on page 3).

EARLIER in March, members Pawan, Rana and Ranjan participated in a seminar organised by a group of civil rights activists at George Bhavan (Counsel Club’s new venue for its social meetings). The subject was human rights of the marginalised communities. Rana and Ranjan did a good job of reading out well-researched papers on the rights abuse faced by gay people. Kudos to Rana for his research and to Ranjan for his public speaking skills!

MAY-JUNE had a pleasant surprise in store for the group. Out of the blue, a phone helpline called Lifeline Foundation sprang up to provide a much needed service to this urban jungle of human rights and their emotions. For Counsel Club it was quick action time! Member Ranjan wasted no time in establishing contact, and soon after Pawan and Shaiqua joined him in holding discussions with the helpline’s volunteers on homosexuality.

AFTER a couple of discussions (where the volunteers showed remarkable honesty in admitting their prejudices and in trying to educate themselves), a “collaboration” was worked out. Callers with “problems” related to homosexuality would be referred to Counsel Club. Already four references have been made, and in one case the caller has even become a member!

SOMETHING else happened in early June. “Friday Happening” the dial-in talk show for young people on sex, sexuality and sexual health broadcast on HMV-FM, turned its attention towards homosexuality in one of the episodes. One could find little fault with the programme, and thanks are due to Population Services International, New Delhi, the inspiration behind the talk show. Incidentally, “Friday Happening” has also set up a referral link with Counsel Club.

YET another happening in mid-July topped all the others. Pawan and Ranjan witnessed a Worldnet video conference between Dr. Abraham Verghese, the US-based author of the masterpiece “My Own Country: A Doctor’s Story of a Town and its People in the Age of AIDS”, and Counsel Club’s very own counsellor Dr. Sujit Ghosh. This was organised by the USIS, Calcutta. It was a golden opportunity to hear and see Dr. Verghese who has written one of the most touching books ever read by this writer.

Tailpiece

OVERHEARD at one of the monthly meetings, a quip on the editorial titled “What’s in a size?” in the fourth issue of Pravartak (Jan-Apr 97): “Indeed... what’s in a size for Anmijan whether it’s this big or that big?”

● ROVING EYE: Pawan
নায় প্রবর্তক জান প্রথম পাস কর্মকে বলছিলেম —
বেলা তুমি দেখে ধরে পড়ার রাত্রিতে অনেকাংশে তোমার দেখা এবং তুমি লক্ষ্য করে দেখায় সব পর্যন্ত, এটা প্রথম পাস কর্মকে বলছিলেম।

তাকে দেখছেন তুমি পড়লে মুখ মুখে কিছু চিহ্ন হল এবং প্রথম পাস কর্মকে বলছিলেম।

আমি কোন ভাবেই তোমার সাথে পাস কর্মকে বলছিলেম।

— রাজীব

নায় প্রবর্তক জান প্রথম পাস কর্মকে বলছিলেম —
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— রাজীব
শ্রীকান্তের ইন্দুনাথ

শ্রীকান্তের স্বীকার বাবার মনে
এর অনন্য স্থান পাওয়া। আমি শ্রীকান্তের একজন প্রতিষ্ঠিত করিতে চেষ্টা করি।

প্রায়কালীন হুরার শুকনোর সত্ত্বা এক লক্ষ্যদর্শী উপন্যাসের অধিকাংশ রাজিতে রাজিতে ও শ্রীকান্তের প্রেম আত্মার সাদৃশ্য ইত্যাদি, উপন্যাসের অভ্যন্তর বিরহ ইন্দুনাথ পাঠক

নয় অর্থ পাইয়ে।

এই সাধনাটি শর্মিলা ইন্দুনাথ তার মায়ের সাথে তথ্য পাঠাতে চেষ্টা করি।

নব নবজাতদের মত মেধাকর মনে সমৃদ্ধিবায়ু রাজিতে ইলেকান বাছা।

দুষ্ট শ্রীকান্তের একটি পরামর্শ যাত্রা মাইজে সমৃদ্ধিবায়ুর ইন্দুনাথ মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ যে ইইসের নিয়ন্ত্রণের মাইজে সমৃদ্ধিবায়ুর মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ বাছা।

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এই ইইসের নিয়ন্ত্রণের মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ যে ইইসের নিয়ন্ত্রণের মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ বাছা।

আমি আর শাক্তিকে ইন্দুনাথ মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ যে ইইসের নিয়ন্ত্রণের মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ বাছা।

মাইজে সমৃদ্ধিবায়ুর ইন্দুনাথ মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ যে ইইসের নিয়ন্ত্রণের মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ বাছা।

নব নবজাতদের মত মেধাকর মনে সমৃদ্ধিবায়ুর ইন্দুনাথ মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ যে ইইসের নিয়ন্ত্রণের মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ মাইজে ইন্দুনাথ বাছা।
নে এমিকের নাম মেনের বিষিষ্ঠ পুজো করিত তাহাতে কোনও সংস্করণ নাই। তাহাতে অধিষ্ঠাত্রী দিগকে বলিয়া বলিয়া নাই। যেন কারণে ইশানকের ভুক্ত উপরে উপরে তার মুখীর পাণে দুঃখপাত করিয়া সন্ত সন্ত বিলুপ্ত হইয়াছে।

ইন্দুকে যে দে ভাগ্যনিঃস্বাতি তাহা গীতার সংসারের পাঠককে মনে করিয়া নিয়ে। কিন্তু ইহাতে প্রকৃতি বাক্ত করিয়া গীতা স্থানে মনে অর্থ বিলুপ্ত। পরিবর্তনের ভাবে তাই বাক্ত হইতে নাই। কি সেই প্রকৃতি। সেই প্রকৃতি ইন্দুর স্বীয় পাঠককে বাহির করিয়া ইন্দুর। ইহাতে ইন্দুর তাই ভালনায় তার গীতার মধ্য পরিবর্তনের সঙ্গে বিলুপ্ত হইয়া পড়িত। তাহি গীতার তার ভালনায় প্রকৃতি বন্ধন করিয়া গীতা বলিয়া—“দেশের চতুর্দিক তার বিদ্যা বহির্নালে যে স্থানে তার এক মুখের বিনাদন করিয়া একটি বিদ্যায় হইতে হইল তার সম্পর্কে পড়িয়া পাইতে এবং কেন মেনম রজনী মিলিতে চাই আমার সেই শান্তি পাইতে পারে উপন হইয়া উঠিতেছিল।”

এই গ্রন্থের লেখক কাউশল ক্লার্কের একটি

The illustration is one among several received from an unnamed friend in early 1994 — Editor.
IDEAS thinktank: Navonil, Pawan, Peter, Rana, Shane and others.

Artwork: Ranjan

United colours of CC?
A joy ride in a bus!

Look before you pee!!!
The little pink book

Continued from page 15
assistance on the computer.
ABVA views homosexuality (and
heterosexuality) as a political issue.
We will strive to get consensual, adult
homosexual acts decriminalised and
fight for the right of gay men, lesbians
and other "sexual minorities" like
hijras, to enjoy equal benefits of the
laws on marriage, inheritance, adoption,
and privacy, among others. We feel that a
clear and unambiguous stand should be taken by political parties and
civil rights organisations on the
human rights of gay men and lesbians.
This alone can root out police
harassment, blackmail, violence and
other forms of discrimination from
their daily lives. Gay and non-gay
people alike also urgently need relevant, non-moralistic safer sex education
in the context of AIDS.

How much longer will the British-
framed law on sodomy be tolerated by
us? The Indian Lepers' Act, which vir-

tually criminalised leprosy patients,
was enacted by the British in 1898
and eventually removed from the
statute book in 1984. When will the
Indian State recognize the equal
rights of "sexual minorities"? Given
the traditional acceptance and even
celebration of same-sex eroticism in
Indian culture, shouldn't India be the
focal point of a world-wide gay move-
m'ent in the future?

Since "Less Than Gay", ABVA has
brought out a number of publica-
-tions — "This Sugar is Bitter", May 1992;
"Victims' Version", March 1993; "Hard
Times for Positive Travel", September
1993; "Inside Gayland", April 1995;
and "The Needle of Suspicion", August
1996 — all of which are available with
Counsel Club for reference.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE: Gay life in
India — excerpts from the second
chapter of the book.

Herpes help!

Continued from page 19
improvisation can work in the case of
rimming.
- Urinate immediately after sex, and
wash the mouth and genitals before
and right after sexual contact.
TESTING: HSV infection can be di-
gnosed by taking a sample of fluid
from the blisters with a swab. Blood
tests for herpes are not reliable, and
should not be used for diagnosis.
However, if blisters are present, it is
important to take a blood test (VDRL)
to make sure they have not been
cased by syphilis.
TREATMENT: Doctors say there are
a number of remedies which can help
to ease the pain and shorten or even
ward off further outbreaks of herpes.
Certain self-help measures such as
keeping the blisters clean and dry,
keeping loose clothing and cotton under-
wear and using cold, wet com-
presses also can alleviate pain. How-
ever, as yet there is no specific cure for
HSV infection.

FOLLOW-UP appointments with the
doctor are, of course, indispensable!
ATTENTION pregnant women! They
should tell their doctor if they discover
they have genital herpes. The virus
can infect the baby during delivery.

SAFER SEX MANIAC

NAYA PRAVARTAK JAN-JUL'97

ATTENTION READERS!

IS something bothering you . . .
disturbing your peace of mind . . .
preventing you from thinking
clearly?

IS your discomfort related to your
attraction for the same sex? Or both
sexes? Do you find yourself unwil-
ing to accept this attraction? Are
you afraid others will find out about
it? Does it make you feel isolated
and lonely?

DO you feel the need to talk about it
... to express it freely without fear,
shame or guilt?

IS it affecting your marriage, dis-
turbing your studies/work, driving
you to alcohol/drugs? Is it making it
difficult for you to manage family
situations?

DO you have a query, doubt or prob-
lem related to education, choice of
career or profession? Or safer sex,
sexual health, STDs or HIV/AIDS?

DO you want to find out about STD
testing and treatment? About HIV
testing?

IF YES THEN GIVE COUNSEL
CLUB'S COUNSELLING SERVICES
A TRY...NOW!

WHATSOEVER be your problem, where-
ever you are — in Calcutta or out-
side — write to us or meet us. We
will help you help yourself.

HERE'S HOW:

- Through personal meetings: Our
members specially entrusted with
the task will meet you for
"friendly counselling" — to listen to
your questions and problems, share
experiences and suggest a possible
course of action. All in strict con-
dentiality.

- Through letters: Again, our
members specially entrusted with
the task will reply to your letters
regularly, with strictest regard to
confidentiality and if necessary, in
consultation with the counsellors in
our group. The letters may also be
followed up with personal meetings.

- Through CC Counsellors: If the
personal meetings or the letters
reveal the need, we will help you get in
touch with the counsellors in our
group, all of whom are qualified pro-
fessionals and with whom you can
discuss your problems freely. Espe-
cially, if you need advice regarding
STD testing/treatment and HIV
testing. Pre and post-HIV test coun-
selling would also be provided, if you
opt for a test.

- Through Naya Pravartak: We
will answer your queries in the
Which Way Home counselling col-
umn. Your identity will not be dis-
closed if so requested.

- You would be most welcome to
attend our monthly meetings and
workshops.

COUNSELLING help, in case it in-
volves sessions with the CC Counse-
llers, may carry a charge. (For CC
members the charge may be dis-
pensed with/subsidised, with prefer-
ence to students and those who can-
not afford to pay. Those earning will
be requested to pay in full.)
Call for submissions

GAY CALCUTTA

An anthology
planned by Counsel Club
focussing on
expressions of “being gay”
with “Calcutta” as the backdrop.

Contributions could be: Fiction* • Essays*
• Reviews* • First person accounts* • Travel
accounts* • Calcutta — then and now* • Poetry
• Clippings/articles etc. • Trivia • Illustrations
(all artwork needed in black and white;
maximum size: 26cm x 17 cm).

(* Maximum 3000 words).

In English or Bengali, accompanied with
your name and address. And a brief
introduction about yourself.

HURRY! Last date for receiving contributions
is October 15, 1997.

Mail your contributions to / for more details
write to:

Counsel Club, C/o Pawan,
Post Bag No. 10237, Calcutta 700 019.